

Transfer Committee & Yosef Weitz Quotes

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BASED On Declassified Israeli Documents & Personal Diaries

Although much of the Israeli documents concerning the "transfer" of the Palestinians people (and other war crimes) are still classified, there are ample evidence to point that the third and final "Transfer Committee", headed by [Yosef Weitz](#), was instrumental in the wholesale ejection of Palestinian people during the 1948 war. The committee was formed between early May 1948 and until late October 1948, and it was made up of :

- Yosef Weitz representing the Jewish National Fund,
- Eliahu Sasson who headed the Arab Affairs Department at the Jewish Agency, and
- Ezra Danin representing the Israel war Cabinet.

The "Transfer Committee's" major goals were :

1. The eviction of the Palestinian people,
2. Blocking their return, and
3. The destruction and expropriation of their homes (see its Blueprint below).

The "Transfer Committee" (especially Weitz) had unfettered access to [Ben-Gurion](#), the rest of the Israel Cabinet, and local Haganah officials on the field, which enabled it to become extremely effective and efficient in achieving its goals.

The chronology of the below quotes paints a clear picture of the mind set of the "Transfer Committee", [Ben-Gurion](#), and [Moshe Sharett](#) during the 1948 war.

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In a letter by Ezra Danin to [Yosef Weitz](#) in May 1948 regarding the establishment of a "Transfer Committee":

"an institution whose role will be . . . to seek ways to carry out transfer of the [Palestinian] Arab population at this opportunity when it has left its normal place of residence ... Let us not waste the fact that a large [Palestinian] Arab population has moved from its home, and achieving such a thing again would be VERY difficult in NORMAL times. . . . if we do not seek to encourage the return of the [Palestinian] Arabs . . . then they must be confronted with *faits accomplis*." Among the *faits accomplis* he proposed were the destruction of Palestinians houses, "settling Jews in all areas evacuated" and expropriating Palestinian properties, see the proposed blueprint of the "Transfer Committee" below for more details. ([Benny Morris](#), p. 135 & [Expulsion Of The Palestinians](#), p. 187)

On May 28, 1948 [Yosef Weitz](#) met [Moshe Sharett](#) (who play an important roll in the first and second Transfer Committees between 1937-142) and asked whether:

"action should be taken to turn the flight of the [Palestinian] Arabs from the country and blocking their return into an established fact?" If so, he proposed to entrust two or three persons "to deal with this according to a premeditate plan." He also suggested that " a three-person committee" composed of 'Ezra Danin, Elyaho Sasson (who headed the Arab Affairs Department of the Jewish Agency), and himself, be appointed to "work out a plan of action directed [at achieving] the transfer goal."

[Sharett](#) congratulated Weitz on his *initiative* and declared that he, too, believed that this "phenomena [Palestinian flight] must be exploited and turned into an established fact. ([Expulsion Of The Palestinians](#), p. 188)

And two days later, [Yosef Weitz](#) noted in his diary:

"From now on, I shall call it the Transfer Committee. It seems that [Moshe] Sharett [the first Israeli foreign minister] took measures approving the appointment of this committee the day before yesterday [on 28 May] in talks with secretaries. In the evening I discussed this question [population transfer] with [Eliezar] Kaplan [finance minister] and he also thinks that the transfer fact should be consolidated and the departing [Palestinian Arabs] not allowed to return." ([Expulsion Of The Palestinians](#), p. 188)

On June 5, 1948 [Weitz](#) met [Ben-Gurion](#) in Tel Aviv and gave him the Blueprint of the "Transfer Committee", the Blueprint caption was:

"Scheme for the Solution of the [Palestinian] Arab Problem in the State of Israel," which was contained in a three-page memorandum signed by Weitz, Danin, and Sasson. The memorandum called for :

1. "Retrospective transfer".
2. Preventing Palestinian Arabs from returning to their homes.
3. Destroying Palestinian Arab villages during military operations.
4. Preventing cultivation and harvesting of Palestinian Arab lands.
5. Settling Jews in Palestinian Arab towns and villages.
6. Instituting legislation barring the return of the refugees.
7. Launching a propaganda campaign for the resettlement of the refugees in other places.

According to [Yosef Weitz](#) , [Ben-Gurion](#) "agreed to the whole [transfer policy] line," (see the below Ben-Gurion's account of the proposed T.C.'s Blueprint) but thought that the Yishuv (Palestinian Jewish community before 1948) should first take care of the destruction of the Palestinian villages, establish Jewish settlements and prevent Palestinian cultivation and only later worry for the organized resettlement of the Palestinian refugees in the Arab countries. ([Benny Morris](#), p. 136-7 & [Expulsion Of The Palestinians](#), p. 189)

According to [Ben-Gurion](#) in the early May 1948, he approved establishing the "Transfer Committee" to oversee:

"the cleaning up [*nikui* in Hebrew] of the [Palestinian] Arab settlements, cultivation of [Arab] fields and their settlement [by Jews], and the creation of labour battalion carry out this work." ([Benny Morris](#), p. 137) Note that he, as often was his practice, did not clearly state his intention of destroying Palestinian villages.

Although the Israeli official Cabinet had not been yet given, the committee continued functioning, supervising the systematic destruction of villages in various sections as part of a policy designed to further Palestinian exodus and the return of the refugees. The actual destruction was the joint effort of the army and the Jewish settlements. The Israeli historian [Benny Morris](#) went to describe the influence Yosef Weitz and the "Transfer Committee" had on the Cabinet and the implementation of its goals:

"At this stage [early June] [Weitz](#) was not to be deterred by the lack of formal, written permit for his [Transfer Committee's] activities. . . . [He talked] with Danin about how to go about destroying the abandoned villages---where would the money come from, the tractors, the dynamite, the manpower? And where it best to begin? . . . With most able-bodied men in the Yishuv conscripted into the IDF, with most equipment, such as tractors and tracked caterpillars, in use by the army or in agriculture, and with dynamite is perennially short supply, Weitz had a job of it organizing what amounted to an enormous project of destruction. . . .

But there is no doubt that Ben-Gurion agreed to [Weitz's](#) scheme [above Blueprint]. Finance Minister Elizer Kaplan said as much to Weitz when they met on 8 June, adding his own endorsement of the plan. . . . On 13 June Weitz traveled north to Beit Shean and Jezreel valleys, where he saw: *Our people. . . . reaping in the fields of* [the Palestinian Arab village of] [Zarin](#), [Weitz recorded]. In Kibbutz Beit Hashita, Weitz met Goldenberg, Savid Baum from Kfar Yehezkeel, and the commander of the IDF's (Golani Brigade) battalion in the Jezreel valley, Avraham Yoffe. *From the start of our talk*, Weitz recorded, *it became clear that there is agreement among us on the question of the abandoned villages: destruction, renovation, and settlement* [by Jews]" ([Expulsion Of The Palestinians](#), p. 190)

On Jun 16, 1948 [Yosef Weitz](#) noted in his diary while watching the destruction of a Palestinian village ([al-Mughar](#)):

"Three tractors are completing the destruction. I was surprised nothing moved in me at the sight NO REGRET AND NO HATRED, as this is the WAY of the world. . . . The dwellers of these mud-houses did not want us to exist here." ([Benny Morris](#), p. 162 & [Expulsion Of The Palestinians](#), p. 190)

And on the same date too, [Yosef Weitz](#) reported to [Ben-Gurion](#) a progress report on the destruction of the Palestinian towns, he wrote:

"[al-]Mughar, Fajja, Biyar Adas have been destroyed. [Destruction is proceeding in] Miska, Beit Dajan (east of Tel Aviv), [in] Hula [Valley], [in] Hawassa near Haifa, As Sumeiriya near Acre and Ja'tun [perhaps Khirbat Ja'tun] near Nahariya, Manshiya . . . near Acre. Daliyat ar Ruha has been destroyed and work is about to begin at [al-]Buteimat and Sabbarin." ([Benny Morris](#), p. 162)

Late October 1948, as the mass majority of the Palestinian refugees were already ethnically cleansed, the "Transfer Committee" submitted its final memorandum to the Cabinet, it stated:

"The EXODUS of the [Palestinian] Arabs beyond the boundaries of the State of Israel was not from the start an impossible occurrence and its occurrence is not among the surprises that have never been predicted. . . . On the contrary, much had been said about such a possibility, which has come out of planned considerations, in recent years, as a solution to the problem of the whole Land of Israel." ([Expulsion Of The Palestinians](#), p. 196)

When Israel became under increased UN and international pressure to allow the return of Palestinian refugees to their homes, farms, and business, Eliahu Sasson wrote [Moshe Sharett](#) in September 1948:

"I would advise reconsidering the [Palestinian] refugee problem. . . I do not by this advise mean, heaven forbid, the return of all the refugees. No, again no. My meaning is the return of a small part of them, forty to fifty thousand, over a long period . . [starting] immediately, to silence a lot of people in the next meeting of the UN [General Assembly]." ([Benny Morris](#), p. 147)

In August 1948, a report reached the leadership of the Mapam party describing the destruction of the Palestinian villages based on the instruction of the [Yosef Weitz](#) and the "Transfer Committee", the report stated:

"The destruction of the [Palestinian] Arab villages has been going on for some months now. We are on the Syrian border and there is a danger that [Palestinian] Arabs will use [the abandoned villages] for military operation if they get the chance. But I spoke to a number of members from [kibbutz] Ma'ayan Baruch and nearby Kibbutzim and I got the impression that there exists the possibility that there is a desire to destroy the villages and [the Palestinian] houses so that it will be impossible for the [Palestinian] Arabs to return to them. A week ago a representative of the JNF [possibly Yosef Nahmani, director of the JNF's Galilee district office and Weitz's agent in the area] came to visit. He saw that in the [abandoned Palestinian] village of As Sanbariya, which is a kilometer from Ma'ayan

Baruch, several houses are still standing, albeit without roofs. He told the secretariat of the kibbutz to destroy the houses immediately and he said openly that this will enable us to take the village's lands, because the [Palestinian] Arabs won't be able to return there. I am sorry to say the kibbutz agreed immediately without thinking about what they were doing." ([Benny Morris](#), p. 168)

Soon after the war's end in 1949, [Yosef Weitz](#) pleaded with [Ben-Gurion](#) to take a firm and unequivocal stand against any possibility of restoring the Palestinian refugees to their homes. In September he proposed a series of measures which would drive the refugees far from the border areas, deep into the Arab hinterland. He insisted that Palestinian refugees:

" . . . must be harassed continually." ([1949, The First Israelis](#), p. 29-30)

In mid-1949 the Transfer Committee (of which [Yosef Weitz](#) was one of the three influential members) recommended that if Israel was to be compelled to repatriate Palestinian refugees in the future, she must categorically refuse to return them to their villages--- only to the towns, where they should not exceed 15% of the Jewish population. ([1949, The First Israelis](#), p. 29-30 & [Expulsion Of The Palestinians](#), p. 199)

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